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Book Report on,

Convergence:

Philosophies and Pedagogies for Developing the Next Generation of Humanitarian Engineers and Social Entrepreneurs

Summary;

Convergence, as the cover elicits, is about interdisciplinary service learning, frugal and humanitarian engineering and innovation, sustainability, social entrepreneurship, and scholarly research and reflection in these areas and their intersection with the “bottom of the pyramid”, as well as academia, governments, and organizations. The book’s contents also include a significant amount of material that goes hand in hand with the ideas that have been central to this class like Paul Polak, and Kiva, KickStart pumps, cooking stoves, solar project. There is also a large share of helpful information about the entire philosophies from top to bottom involved in these projects. This includes everything from communication philosophies, stakeholder analysis, business strategies, as well as various big-picture philosophical points. The origin of the title pertains to notion that, the world is experiencing a grand fractal of of what occurred during renaissance. In this regard, not only are we witnessing the aftermath of an explosion of multidisciplinary innovation, we are also witnessing a sort of implosion multidisciplinary, “real-world” application of this technology. The successes, failures, “ins”, and “outs” of this entire “trans-discipline” effort, be it in engineering, education, service learning, business, projects, or all of the above, is the basis of the ideation published within the ten uniquely authored chapters of “Convergence”. In that regard though, Convergence is really about 10 different topics, many of which are about several unique subtopics. These chapters and topics are;

1. Rationale
2. Service Learning In Engineering
3. Humanitarian Engineering
4. Using the Social Entropeneurship Model to Teach Engineering Students How to Create Lasting Social Change
5. Frugal Innovation
6. The Philosophy and Praxis of Convergence to Shape an Emergent High-Impact Learning Through Service Program
7. Learning Through Service: Best Practices
8. International Perspectives on Service Learning
9. Open Access Scholarly Knowledge: a Common Wealth
10. Stakeholders

Personal Perspective;

A couple of the biggest take-aways for me from this book were, one, that the concept of Humanitarian and/or Frugal Engineering/EWB/etc. is a relatively new and modern concept that doesn’t have significant recorded scholarly history extending beyond only a couple decades ago. The same is also true for the concept of service learning. The idea of combining these concepts into something that function as a state university curriculum credit is even newer and is a concept that a flood of research within the past decade or two backs and is well on its way to fruition. Or at least convincingly aught to be; yet despite the seemingly massive trove of anecdotal studies and programs and success stories, the greater ideas of humanitarianism, frugality, and service learning don’t seem to occupy a meaningful amount of space in the average curriculum or degree requirements. Moreover, the innovative pedagogical structures involved with these ideas have proved to be a highly valuable experience for everyone involved when executed in properly.